Yesterday was a lot like every other day tat I had. As always, I was constantly depressed and didn’t care what was going on. Yesterday, however, didn’t end in the best way that I had hoped for. It was around 3 p.m. when I got a phone call from my sister. She was hysterical. I could barely understand the words that were coming out of her mouth because of how much she was crying. Of all of the gibberish that she was saying, 5 strong words stuck out and I will never forget them.

“Barry, Uncle Nick is dead”, she groaned.

I slumped back into the couch the moment I heard those words. I began to think about everything that I had ever done with my uncle. Then I saw myself standing at the gas station St. Michael, Pennsylvania with my Uncle Nick. He was pumping the cheapest fuel into his little S10 pickup truck. We were on our way to go to camp like we did every year before. It used to be like a routine until my uncle passed away in the winter of 2009. Now I will probably never go back again.

We were sitting in the truck just after we left Sheetz we were driving down 219, on the way to our campsite in Mount Union, Pennsylvania. I was munching on a snickers bar that he had gotten me just moments earlier. Considering that I was only at the age of 11, I considered myself to be very mature for my age.

“Uncle Nicky”, I said with a look of disappointment, “Do we have to clean out the boat before we can go fishing?”

He just slowly turned his head toward me with that big grin that always found a way to cheer me up.

“Yes we do, but don’t worry about it, You can clean out the cooler and ill take care of the boat.”

Suddenly I got a grin on my face that stretched from ear to ear and, I thanked him. I then turned my face to the right and began counting the trees as we passed them. I reached 26 and lost count. I then had to start all over again. As I was counting I didn’t pay attention to the fact that I was gradually drifting away into the land of dreams. Before I knew it, I was sound sleep, and my Uncle Nick was driving down the highway still grinning without a single regret for anything.

By the time I opened my eyes again we were already at camp, and he had the boat completely cleaned out. All of my stuff was unpacked, he had the cooler organized, and he was sitting at the edge of the dock staring over the blackened water of a June evening. I stepped out of the truck and began to walk over to him. As I was about half way there I noticed that my other uncle’s camper wasn’t where it normally was. I felt somewhat confused due to the fact that I was used to him beating us to camp. What I didn’t know is that this year wasn’t going to be like all of the other years that I spent at camp for the summer. When I got up to where my Uncle Nick was at the first thing I asked him was where the other campers were. He then told me that not many people would be coming this year. I quickly asked him why to discover that my Uncle Romah and his family had moved to South Carolina. It upset me, because nobody had told me about this. Without him, almost all of my cousins and a few aunts and all of their friends would not come this year. It was only my Uncle Nick, Uncle Jerry, Aunt Janine, and me. My main worry was that nobody would be able to take me out of the boat. All of my worries were quickly exterminated from my mind because I was for some reason extremely exhausted. After mulling everything over for a few moments I decided to go into my personal camper and try to get some sleep.

When I woke up I found out that everyone else was sleeping. It was about 3 a.m. and I was extremely cold. I then left my camper to go out and see how clear the water was. I discovered that the water was almost as clear as the day. I ran quickly over to my camper and grabbed my fishing pole and my tackle box. I found it somewhat hard to bait and cast without light, so I decided to light a fire along the shore. I used some leaves and small twigs to get the fire started. It didn’t take long for me to get a nice little fire going. This gave me light and a bit of warmth. I quickly pulled out my tackle box and began scurrying through the different compartments looking for my sinkers and my fishing hooks. I wasn’t exactly a professional when it came to setting up a fishing rod, but I knew what I was doing to an extent. After about 7 years of baiting my own hooks, losing plenty of fish, and learning from my mistakes, I now thought that I could bait my hook without my uncle looking over my shoulder correcting me.

After I got everything ready, I placed a nice big log onto the fire to make sure it wouldn’t go out. I then walked up to the brush-covered riverbed so that I could cast out. I was careful not to get my line that was dangling caught in any of the bushes or small trees. I eyed up a nice little spot beside a rock that I could see sticking up about 3 inches out of the top of the water. I aimed carefully and let lose my line, which sent my hook with the worm carefully looped flying out into the river. I hit about 5 feet away from where I had hoped for, but I didn’t mind. This was the first time that I had ever fished completely by myself. The rush of the moment was almost too much for me to take. The wind was cool and constant, and I didn’t have a care in the world.

After about an hour of sitting in my little spot staring out into the water, I began to grow impatient. I started eying up the boat. I started growing more and more impatient until I finally snapped. I hurriedly reeled in my line and secured my hook. I then grabbed all of my gear and rushed toward the boat. After carefully placing everything in it, I began to un-hook the anchor. Before I could get the anchor onto the boat, I stopped. I stared at the rope that was in my hands. I thought to my self for a few moments, and then I lowered the anchor, grabbed my stuff, and went back up to my original fishing spot. I put my line back out and continued to think to myself. I began to think about how I almost mustered up the courage to take out the boat without my Uncle. The one think that stopped me from doing it was the fear of what could have happened because I didn’t know the first thing about the boat. I wanted to grow up, but I didn’t want to grow up faster than I could handle.

Back then it was always the smallest things in life that dictated the decisions that I made. I always had my uncle there by my side correcting my mistakes and teaching me more than I could have ever learned without him. I still can’t believe that he is gone. Some people say that death is another path, and I believe that. I’m glad that I had asomebody as loving as him in my life to help me get through all of the hassles and heartaches. I can picture my uncle down at the river fishing without a care in the world for all eternity.